



Enabling Substance Abusers



What is Enabling?



- **The actions of others -- including leaders, supervisors & peers -- that allow or encourage alcohol and/or other drug abuse to continue or worsen by preventing the abuser from experiencing the negative consequences of their abuse.**
- **Allowing abuse to continue, by not confronting the issue or turning a blind eye to it.**
- **Encouraging abuse by protecting or covering up for the abuser - i.e. the Soldier doesn't have to face the negative consequences of their actions.**



Why people Enable



- They want to protect or help the substance abuser.
- They don't want to jeopardize their relationship with the abuser.
- They think that by ignoring the abuser's problem it will go away.
- They don't want negative attention given to their unit or to their leadership abilities.
- Enabling makes them feel good - taking care of their Soldier.
- They have unresolved issues of alcohol and/or other drug use in their own families.





Examples of Enabling



- **Not enforcing underage drinking laws - turning a blind eye.**
- **Allowing a Soldier who comes to work with a hangover to get by with doing less work.**
- **Ignoring the fact that SPC Snuffy seems to get into some sort of trouble about every other month and in each case he was drinking at the time.**
- **Trying to solve the Soldier's problem in house - Taking care of your own.**
- **Not confronting a Soldier that you know has a drinking problem because he/she hasn't gotten a DUI or other blotter incident.**
- **Covering up a supposed one time incident by a Soldier so he/she does not put their clearance at risk or get into trouble.**



Examples of Enabling



- **Failing to recognize and document the dysfunctional patterns and behaviors that a abuser exhibits.**
- **Overlooking unacceptable behavior.**
- **Overlooking Soldiers' verbal comments about their alcohol/other drug use.**
- **Failing to report alcohol incidents.**
- **Attempting to change the behavior by “counseling” problem Soldiers rather than referring them to the ASAP.**
- **Believing that a Soldier couldn't possibly be involved with alcohol/other drugs because he/she is a good Soldier.**



Examples of Enabling



- **Failing to admit or deal with alcohol/drug problems to protect the person, one's own position, or the unit's reputation.**
- **Covering up the drug and/or alcohol abuse of a Soldier.**
- **Doing or allowing someone else to do the abusing Soldier's work for him/her.**
- **Recognizing the problem and doing nothing.**



Breaking the Enabling Pattern



- **Help the abuser face the unpleasant consequences of his/her behavior.**
- **Stop taking responsibility for the abuser's actions.**
- **Allow all employees (military and civilian) to deal openly and maturely with their own personal experiences.**
- **Make a commitment to develop a positive, supportive work atmosphere where drug use and alcohol abuse is not tolerated.**

Summary

- **Soldier's who abuse drugs and/or alcohol will exhibit some behavior that you should recognize.**
- **As a leader you must take action and get the Soldier help before the problem gets worse. Sometimes getting in trouble is their first step to realizing they have a problem.**
 - **Refer Soldiers for screening and evaluation - if you suspect a problem even if the Soldier has not gotten in trouble. Get the Soldier help before he/she gets in trouble.**
 - **Take negative actions against Soldiers who get in trouble with drugs or while using alcohol.**
 - **Ensure Soldiers are counseled when unable to properly perform their duties because of alcohol abuse the night before.**
- **Bottom Line - Don't be a Soldier's Enabler!**